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ABSTRACT

Bar foundations and bar association staff members involved in law-related education (LRE) have taken a number of different approaches to working with school districts, boards of education, teachers, and administrators. This bulletin looks at three of the approaches. One approach is networking with schools and enthusiastic resource people who can be counted on to maintain a high level of interest in the program. Examples are drawn from seven states where this approach is used: Michigan, Arizona, New York, Missouri, Kansas, Texas, and Washington. A second approach is building upon a strong teacher or groups of teachers who can be counted on to breathe life into a new program and eventually become trainers of other teachers. Examples of this approach are taken from three states: Idaho, North Dakota, and South Carolina. The final method is that followed in Alaska where the geographic area is large and the population small. Sub-committees were set up in each area of the state to see that LRE programs were implemented in the districts. A state steering committee and the Anchorage and the Alaska Bar Associations served as the coordinators. The examples indicate a variety of ways in which LRE programs can be implemented and maintained. (JB)

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TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE BULLETIN NO 1

# Bar Associations Share Their Tips for Working with the Schools

Amrican Bar Association ABA
Special Committee on Youth Education for Citizenship

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Bulletin

*American Bar Association* *Special Committee on Youth Education for Citizenship*

# Bar Associations Share Their Tips for Working with the Schools

by Jim Fine

## Procedures Tried and True

Bar foundation and bar association staff members involved in law-related education have taken a number of different approaches to working with school districts, boards of education, teachers, and administrators. There are similarities to many of these methods, yet despite the overlap, each association confronts the situations in quite individual ways.

Law-related education works for many different reasons. School systems across the country with LRE courses in their classrooms see success wearing coats of very different colors. The same course might even look quite different from class to class in the same hallway in the same school! What, then, makes such varied approaches work within these districts around the country?

Three different categories emerged as I spoke with bar leaders around the country. One was the approach of networking with schools and enthusiastic resource people who could be counted on to maintain a high level of interest in the program. A second way was building on a strong teacher or groups of teachers who could be counted on to breathe life into a new program and eventually become trainers of other teachers themselves.

The final method of linking with the schools belongs in its own category, but could be a good model for states with large geographical areas and a proportionately small population. This is the case in Alaska, which has a dynamic group of people who have overcome their distance barriers and have a strong, young program in place.

## Networking

### Michigan

Michigan has worked out a method of linking with the police departments and department of education to put together a program at the elementary level in the metropolitan Detroit area. The results seem very good.

They have identified a number of very enthusiastic lawyers who genuinely have an interest in being in the classroom. The teachers seem to love it as much as the lawyers, and the kids' skills and attitudes benefit from the mutual admiration that has evolved.

Linda Start, the state LRE coordinator, credits the success of the program to the well calculated participatory methods of the lawyers and the lengthy preparation the teachers seem willing to do. This means that the teacher and the resource person can collaborate on some original and unusual presentations that hold the students' interest throughout the class period.

An example of this is the lawyer who wheeled into the classroom on roller skates, rampaged through the room in an apparent "search" of the place, and went on to nearly ransack the entire classroom before anyone spoke up. The class was immediately hooked into the proposed lesson. The subsequent discussion was vigorous and animated. And the lively conversations that followed for days on the need for rules and their place in the school was witness to the value of long-range planning with the resource person.

It's easy to see that the administration and the community could endorse this type of activity and this type of program for their children. School becomes fun and the idea of law-related education begins to gain a foothold. The program gets a further boost because anything the teachers and lawyers do on one grade level will be tried at all the other levels if it is successful.

### Arizona

Nothing compares to having a well thought-out agenda when working with bar association members or teachers. Not only will the members and teachers appreciate knowing what their tasks will be when a program is implemented, but they value the follow-up critiques that improve their effectiveness as instructors or as resource people.

It is the norm for the Arizona Center for Law-Related Education to plan for intense guidance for these folks as they venture into an LRE program for the first time. It is a given that a new course will sometimes be as unnerving as it is exciting.

"It is unrealistic to expect teachers or resource people to follow-up on their own after one high excitement conference,"

explains Teena Olszewski, director of the Center. Teena and her staff realize that they have a non-stop duty to keep the enthusiasm level high. They must also find that delicate balance between letting teachers and resource people know how much work goes into a successful program while helping them focus on the fact that LRE will enhance their own teaching methods and actual class meetings.

As a result, people on her staff are busy making sure they have visibility at conferences, workshops, and committee meetings which involve civic leaders, social studies curriculum and skills specialists, and even at not-for-profit corporation meetings if the topic is educational change or reform. By being a presence in these types of gatherings, the staff can begin to meet those people who will help support school efforts in mock trials and mock elections. They can achieve needed support from administrators and teachers, as well as community leaders. This blend has helped make the Arizona effort so successful.

### New York

Another very successful link, that of a bar association with a state department of education, is found in New York's Law, Youth and Citizenship Program (LYC). The state bar has worked with at least fifteen individual districts over the past few years, and has been approached by a number of others. Yet, as impressive as this number is, none of this would have been possible without the full support of the New York State Department of Education.

LYC Director Eric Mondschein said that the crucial component of New York's success is the fact that LRE is institutionalized in the state. The state Regent's Exam, given annually to high school students in New York state, is the mechanism for institutionalization because it incorporates law-related education questions. Since the results of this exam are important to schools and students alike, it fosters competently taught LRE courses in each school.

Bulletin

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"Law-related education courses have the most enrollment of any elective course in the state," says Mr. Mondschein. "It is the fastest growing program and [New York] might have the largest LRE program in the 50 states!"

Institutionalization of LRE is a fact of educational life in New York. The hopeful message here is that when it is in place, the department of education is an ally and has a vested interest in seeing the program succeed.

### Missouri

The state bar association has looked to establish a strong relationship with the state department of education in Missouri. Again, the program is aided by the department of education's efforts to make sure that citizenship education is in place in the schools at all levels.

As state LRE Field Director Chris Janku told me, "We have had access to people throughout the state because of our relationship with the State Department of Education. We've found that some schools that we weren't aware of already are involved in LRE."

Another suggestion that Mr. Janku had was the idea of getting the department of education people on the advisory board if possible. The need for wider course dissemination among the districts is greater statewide than in a city like St. Louis, which has had successful LRE programs in place for years, due, in part, to having LRE people in proximity to each other. By placing key educational administrators and directors on a board, statewide support for publications, workshops and other activities can be forthcoming quickly and efficiently.

### St. Louis

As was just mentioned, the St. Louis school system has been the home of a strong law-related education program for some time. It has had a number of leaders in LRE who have been active in writing books, curriculum, and articles about the field. One source of strength that the schools have been able to draw on is the Bar Association of Metropolitan St. Louis.

Steve Jenkins, the LRE staff director for the bar association, recommends that LRE leaders go to local bar associations and foundations and tap every source from the active bar membership lists to the old committee lists. Committee lists which Steve suggested might be reviewed would be the Family Law Committee, the Juvenile Law Committee, and the School Law Committee, as well as any other committees whose subjects would lend themselves to the interests of high school, middle school, or elementary school students.

Steve has had good results with an invitation letter asking attorneys to become resource people, and a packet explaining the strengths of law-related education programs. This may be the kind of approach best suited for use in a bigger city, where the competition in the legal marketplace is stiffer, *pro bono* time is less available, and "billable hours" are at a premium. It is exactly in these larger cities where a grandiose plan for infusion of LRE may fall short, yet the resource person recruited on an individual basis may lead to an immediate bar/school partnership. This is also an approach that might be perfect for a bar association that isn't

currently active in LRE yet is looking for an inroad to that type of program.

### Kansas

Alliances of the kind that Patti Slider, the public information director of the Kansas Bar Association, talked about are yet another slant on working with the larger institutions. In 1984 the Joint Commission for Public Understanding of Law was formed. It consisted of representatives from the Supreme Court of the State of Kansas, the State Board of Education, and the Kansas Bar Association.

"This kind of networking has helped accelerate LRE in our state," Patti said. "It also helped to have an educator like Richard Leighty in getting a teacher network going." Richard Leighty is one of the most energetic and resourceful people in LRE in the state. His efforts in promoting LRE among teachers led recently to his being the only nonlawyer to receive the Bar Association's Outstanding Service award.

The networking is truly a shared effort. The Kansas Bar provides staffing and resources for workshops and seminars, the Supreme Court has supplied speakers for teacher conferences and in-services, and the State Board of Education has set up agendas which not only show that their stamp of approval is on the projects and programs, but attempt to insure that the public is aware of the benefits of LRE.

### Texas

It's not just a typical Texas boast—this state has the task of serving a huge law-related education constituency. Texas has 1,100 school districts, scattered over an enormous area. If the ultimate goal is to have law-related education institutionalized statewide, the task is certainly "Texan" in scope!

Because of the sheer size of the state it has been essential to coordinate activities between the State Bar of Texas and the Texas Education Agency. It is also important to make sure the state advisory board represents the disparate elements of each geographical area of the state. Hope Lochridge, the LRE director for the State Bar of Texas, has made sure that the state board of education, superintendents, social studies coordinators, and other administrators are constantly aware of what is going on in law-related education.

"We do a direct mailing to superintendents and social studies coordinators twice a year," Hope reports, "and we make sure that we have promotional brochures, exhibits, and, if possible, a presentation at their leadership conferences." In addition, Hope tries to attend the state board of education meetings to keep tabs on what they are doing in teacher training. In this way the bar association can continue to tie LRE materials into the curriculum annually.

In states where the geography and the expectations are equally great, the tasks can be complex. However, the State Bar of Texas has found a successful way to control would-be problems.

### Washington

The Washington State Bar Association began a program in 1984 called MENTOR, based on a New York City model. The program pairs high schools with law firms in an effort to promote understanding about our legal system and our laws, to develop critical thinking abilities and problem solving skills, and to show students how they might effectively function within the law.

Program Director Jo Rosner explains, "The law firms agree to do four events over the course of a school year, two per semester. Among the activities which might be done are a visit to the courthouse or a detention center, and mock trials in which the lawyers assist."

The program has worked so well and the state bar has been such an effective force that the school systems have readily embraced the idea. Teachers involved in the program are provided with substitute teachers, and the districts usually pay for transportation for the students as well. But the active involvement of the state bar doesn't end with MENTOR.

At the middle school level, Jo and her colleagues have responded to a perceived need among the teachers for more vibrant ways to teach the kids. Law-related education was introduced in areas of the state that had never been probed before, and they met with the same degree of success that the MENTOR Program had realized. Also, these new areas were encouraged to use local resource people to aid in their curriculum efforts.

"Typically, a small firm will work well with the kids on all grade levels," Jo reports. "The lawyers are younger, just starting out in some cases, and the students can relate to this type of person as an attorney easier than an older, more established one."

The programs in Washington have worked so well that the entire community is being recruited by the state bar as possible resource people. Businessmen, sports stars from professional teams in places like Seattle, and high school and college coaches might be found talking about how law affects their various vocations, showing by example how important it is to know the law regardless of what one chooses to do after high school.

As a measure of its success, the MENTOR Program has grown to 52 partnerships between the schools and law firms in the 1988-89 school year.

## Strength in the Classroom

Among the bar associations and bar foundations which have relied on teacher-initiated LRE, there is a strong commitment and much creativity in implementation, perhaps because these educators must sometimes be groundbreakers and LRE pioneers. In the following states we will see how a committed teacher or group of teachers make LRE flourish.

### Idaho

The new program director at the Idaho State Bar Foundation, Pat Mooney, indicated that the very strong programs in places like Pocatello, Blackfoot, and Idaho Falls were a result of interested teachers. After the programs begin, the bar foundation, the American Bar Association and other national programs can serve a true support function, because LRE is as much a part of the curriculum as history, English, and math.

The energy created in the eastern part of the state is a good example for places with young but strong programs like Boise, and other fledgling programs like the one in Moscow. What has worked well in some cases is the teacher-lawyer link that Ms. Mooney described.

"We begin with the idea of finding ten teachers doing law-related education and pairing them up with ten lawyers. The idea is that the teachers will try and use the lawyers at least three times a year in the classroom or with the classes on field trips," Pat explains. "With ten teachers, we also have a chance to increase our numbers in a more geometric progression rather than just trying to spot individually interested teachers."

Right now the program being initiated in Moscow is relying on the energy of a teacher, Steve McCray, who has already targeted some of his colleagues for help in incorporating LRE into the curriculum in the Moscow and Lewiston areas. If the success in the rest of the state is any indication, the "panhandle" of Idaho will soon be an LRE stronghold as well.

### North Dakota

The Minot School District has the good fortune to have Keith Bjornson on its staff. Keith won the Liberty Bell Award, given by the local bar association, for his work in spreading law-related education among his fellow teachers. As Les Torgerson of the State Bar of North Dakota told me, "Keith's success set off a chain reaction to other districts."

Although the state is a relative newcomer to the LRE field, the Department of Public Instruction has worked with Keith to advance LRE through a statewide resource guide. This public support has greatly aided the advancement of the program in a short time. Now, with this help from the state, more and more attorneys are interested in becoming resource persons.

### South Carolina

Veteran LRE advocate Jack Hanna of the South Carolina Bar Association feels that the best way to implement a new program in any school district is to go directly to the teachers. Then, after there is a successful base of support for the classes and methods, the administrators should be easy to approach.

What are the traits one should look for in the LRE teacher? "You try and find the problem solver," Jack begins. "That same teacher should be one who can work well with the administration. And when you make the choice of teachers, you make it an honor. A teacher should have to submit an application. And you have the administration become a part of the process by having the principal sign and acknowledge the application."

Not to be overlooked, according to Jack, is the value of public relations. Press releases, articles about the LRE teachers and administrators, and publicity about workshops should be a regular part of the program. With a strong base it is then possible to move on to more sophisticated methods of introducing LRE to other members of the legal community. This can be done with mock trials, bicentennial competitions, and mock elections where community lawyers, judges and police could be asked to participate. Since the law-related education program is strong, these people should realize significant benefits in the community as a whole, as well as in their own professional circles.

### Big State, Small Population: Alaska's Solution

When one looks at a map of Alaska superimposed on the "lower 48," as they call the rest of the country, one realizes the vast territory that must be covered to institutionalize law-related education. From the furthest north to furthest south is almost as far as from Minnesota to Lousiana. In addition, the population in the state is sparse, less than a million people statewide. Communications, meetings, and coordination are knotty problems to say the least.

But, as Debra O'Regan, executive director of the Alaska Bar Association explains, organization is the key. The only way to make sure that law-related education was being implemented in the districts was to set up sub-committees in each area of the state. These sub-committees were very formal and well organized to impart a sense of seriousness about the tasks before them. There is, in a sense, a strong central hub, represented by Anchorage and the Alaska Bar Association, and solid spokes, which are the school districts.

The attempt was made to reach each district in the state with LRE programs, figuring that the numbers of teachers and students were manageable even if the miles weren't. But the state steering committee, which itself was made up of quite distant groups from Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, the Kenai Peninsula, and Northern Territories, has taken positive steps to insure continued success and open lines of communication.

"It isn't always easy to coordinate what we want to happen, but we all realize meetings are sometimes impossible," Debra said. "We rely on conference calls whenever possible."

It should be noted that Alaska is fortunate to have very committed proponents of LRE, so that the miles and time between meetings doesn't impair the effectiveness of the effort. In fact, these people seem to thrive on the good results they have seen in their respective districts and have had tremendous success in inviting judges, lawyers and local law enforcement officials to become resource people in the schools. In turn, these resource folks often take LRE methods courses and attend teacher workshops to stay aware of what is happening in Alaska LRE programs.

### Summary

The exciting aspect of compiling this kind of list is that one sees so many ways to approach a community to tap its resources. The various bar associations have discovered many useful ways to see that their individual proposals lead to vital LRE programs. It should also be noted that in each of these states there is overlap of methods, and in each state there are strong, committed LRE educators. We hope these tips will ignite the imagination of others, who will create a new set of strategies for future programs.

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